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FOREIGN NEWS ON APPLES

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DEMAND FOR APPLES IN WESTERN EUROPE

In the following report received in the Foreign Service of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Mr. Edwin Smith, Fruit Specialist of the Bureau in London, points out the changes that have taken place in the European demand for apples in recent years with special reference to the situation in the current season.

Not so many years ago it was considered almost an inflexible rule that only small apples should be shipped to Europe. This has changed a great deal, due to the increasing demand for apples on the Continent. Most Scandinavian markets prefer apples as small as do British markets, and discriminate in price more than the British when large sizes are shipped. But Germany and the surrounding markets want medium-sized apples. The 125 size in boxes usually brings more in Germany than 163;  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch barreled apples do better than  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inch.

Special demands of Paris

Rotterdam has demands similar to Hamburg, but a little further west in Antwerp a demand for even larger sizes is encountered. This is mainly due to demand in France where the regular run of sizes can be sold.

It was in Paris where I encountered the objection to marking barrels " $2\frac{1}{4}$  in. min." because it was claimed that barrels marked " $2\frac{1}{4}$  in. and up" meant that all sizes as picked from the tree were packed, whereas minimum size marking might mean that the large apples had been sorted out. The Frenchman wants large apples as well as small ones. Marking barrels with the full range of sizes would meet the requirements of this trade admirably.

The French consumer is more particular about bruises than any I have ever encountered. In buying a pound of Winesaps in a Parisian fruit store I have seen the salesman throw back apples which had the smallest of pressure-areas, of smaller diameter than a fountain pen. Upon being told that those apples were quite satisfactory, the salesman has given me a most expressive look of astonishment: "Such an odd customer".



The French really want their apples packed in cotton. But, as they cannot get these from America and as tight barrels stand knocking about between New York and Paris better than a box with a bulge, the trend of buying has been toward barrels. The barrel is not so expensive an article. The perfect apples may be sorted from the bruised ones and sold as de luxe fruit and still have moderate priced fruit for the poorer trade.

Several kinds of special packing have been tried to meet the Paris demand, but without commercial success as far as the United States is concerned. The packages have served their purpose, but the volume of perfect fruit required by this market is so small that these special packs do not pay. Investigations of special cushioned fillers for trays, made in Paris and designed for the French trade, showed that unless cushioned strips using wood-wool and costing 3 cents per apple were used, no advantage would be had over double wraps and 3 cushions in our half pear boxes, which would be much cheaper. Moreover, these special fillers would be very awkward for fast packing, so that their use must be restricted to cheap labor.

My recommendations on the subject of packing for France are to use four corrugated pads and supply the market without using less-than-carlot shipments. Direct shipments should be made from the Pacific Coast to a Continental port, where supervised transfer may be made to railway cars for through shipment. Four corrugated pads should be used with all of our export boxes, whether going to Paris or elsewhere.

#### Antwerp's development as a port market

Antwerp receives Spanish and American fruits and her fruit brokers sell at auction when ships are discharged much as they do in other European port markets, although no single large saleroom is available. Buyers from France and Germany dictate Antwerp's demands. Cologne and surrounding territory is convenient to the port of Antwerp and transportation charges between New York and Paris are actually lower via Antwerp than they are via Havre or other French ports. However, additional duty when imported into France through a third country just about equalizes matters.

The cheap apple demand in Paris and the lack of familiarity with American varieties in France and Belgium cause strange varietal demands to be centered at Antwerp. Such varieties as Ben Davis and Gano sell at prices above their real merit, while the prices for Rome Beauty have at times been higher than for Winesap.

The heavy volume of future French apple trade is destined to pass through Antwerp. Flemish and English merchants at that point are willing to reach out across the Atlantic and obtain apple supplies in a way the French are not ready to do. Being very particular, the French buyer wants to make a close inspection before laying out his money. When buying barrels he will find more satisfaction in going to the Belgian port and looking over arrivals than he will in placing orders in the United States.



But Antwerp probably will not become a first rate port for boxed apples until the duty on boxes more nearly equals that on barrels. At present the duty is equivalent to 5 francs per 100 kilos (6 cents per 100 pounds) on barreled apples as against 150 francs per 100 kilos (\$1.89 per 100 pounds) on apples packed and wrapped in boxes. There is some possibility of jumble-packed boxes taking the barrel rate, but this will not make it a box market.

In a year such as this we are likely to think that such new demands as those from France and Belgium have come to stay. We should remind ourselves that this has been a seasonal demand caused by an unusually short crop of apples, not only in France and Belgium, but in other Continental countries. A similar demand may not be repeated for years to come. It has, however, made many familiar with American apples for the first time, so that during late winter months in normal years we may expect more fruit moving in this direction than otherwise would have been the case.

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